Views and Reviews in the World of Art

"Athlete au repos," by Mrs. Victor Soskice, exhibition of Independent Artists.

exhibitions, the technique of the process is illustrated by the best examples of the art. That statement implies the display of pictures which are just as much original works of art as are etchings. For it is a noteworthy fact that the very flexibility of the lithographic process, which has caused its remarkably widespread application to commercial ends, also makes it par excellence a vehicle for the artist. It was so used in the early days of its history: Delacroix, the two Isabeys, Raffet, Menzel, are names that occur readily to the mind. Even its application to caricature brought out such a genius as Daumier and the brilliance—both graceful and trenchant—of Gavarni. The ensuing preponderating use of the medium for business purposes may have served to blind the general public to other possibilities. And that again may have tended to keep artists away. However, within the last thirty years we have seen Whistler's active interest in the process, and some concerted effort in England, France and other countries. And more recently our own artists have been taking it up.

Lithography is preeminently a "painter art." It is a process fairly made for original expression, representing the artist's touch absolutely. It is an autographic art, that is, one which gives a straight reproduction of the artist's drawing with the full impress of his character and mood, displaying his individuality without the intervention of a human translator. All of this is well illustrated in the present exhibition, most of the prints in which form part of the library's S. P. Avery collection.

Technically the lithographic process is a chemical one, based on the want of affinity between grease and water. On a stone of a certain constituteney a drawing is made with a crayon containing an admixture of grease. When a stone thus prepared is inked for printing the ink (also of a greasy nature) will adhere only to the drawing and not to the portions of the stone not drawn upon, these portions having been, furthermore, treated with water and acid to increase resistance to the ink. That, in the baldest possible statement, is the basic principle of lithography.

The process was born practically full fledged—Senefelder foresaw all applications of the art, excepting, of course, photo-lithography. Crayon, pen and ink, ink washes or rubbing of powdered crayon, combined with the scraper, spatterwork—these various tools and combinations—all can be used in this supple, flexible process. And they have been used with full realization of their wide range of possibilities.

The history of artistic lithography records achievements of remarkable variety. The artists of the first half of the nineteenth century rang the changes on its fascinating possibilities, playing its full gamut of tones from the highest notes of silvery gray to the lowest ones of deep, velvety black. Horace Vernet, Eugene Isabey, H. P. Bonington, Delacroix, Decamps, Raffet, Gericault, Daumier, Gavarni, were among the masters of the art in those days. There were also Deveria, Hervier, Barye, Millet, who, besides the "Sower," did the figures for some Indian subjects by Bodmer. And with the later renascence came Fantin-Latour, Whistler, Pennell and others, to accentuate further the remarkable flexibility of this process, its adaptability to artistic individuality and style.

Interesting comparisons may be made between the evanescent, light crayon shades of Whistler and the deep toned washed and scraped pictures of complete effect by Menzel, the delicate architectural scenes of Bonington, and the rich, resounding notes of certain cathedral pictures by Pennell, the vigorous broad crayoning of Daumier and the gray delicacy of Vernet and other early men, the decided, lively line of Gavarni and the tremulous imagery of Fantin-Latour, the robust realism of Gericault and the rampant romanticism of Delacroix. And in color work there may be contrasted the slight suggestions of Whistler, the unctuous, palpitating colors of Lunois ("Absinthe Drinker"), the blare of Ibels, the flat, quiet tones of Volkmann or Kallmorgen, the characteristic work of certain Bohemians.

Legros, Shannon, Short, Rothenstein, Brangwyn in England; Dillon, Toulouse-Lautrec, Carriere, Besnard, Willette in France; Greiner, Beise in Germany and Austria, are among others abroad who within the last generation have availed themselves of the rich possibilities of lithography.

In our own country some interesting attempts were made in the second half of the past century by Thomas Moran, William M. Hunt, H. W. Ranger, C. F. W. Mielats, H. Bolton Jones, J. Alden Weir. And certain ones among our artists are beginning again to respond to the appeal of this process, which offers them so much. Sterner, A. B. Davies, Bellows, Sloan and others have shown resourceful understanding of the art.

One might well wish to see this process more fully appreciated by public and artists. Among the latter appreciation seems to be growing slowly but surely. As for the public, each exhibition such as the present one should help to increase acquaintance with this art, so fascinating, so resourceful, so rich in its past results and its future possibilities.

California Gains From Exposition

J. Nilson Laurvik, in the preface to the annual exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association, expresses confident belief in concrete results to California from the great exposition. He writes:

"Thus we see the fame and influence of Florentine, Venetian, Bolognese and Tuscan art spreading far beyond their borders and becoming a part of Italian art and finally of the art of the world. We find this phenomenon again repeated in our own day in the art of the Dusseldorff, Munich, Barbizon and Impressionist schools of painting, all of which were products of intensely localized influences expressed with such force and fervor as to command outside attention and emulation.

"A somewhat similar instance of this sort of local expression becoming a national force presents itself in the Hudson River school of painters, whose intensely localized point of view gradually dominated the art of the period. These observations lead one to the inevitable conclusion that the only hope of art in California becoming an integral and influential part of American art in general lies in its being less supinely cosmopolitan in character and more truthfully and idiomatically Californian in subject matter and treatment. And, judging by recent manifestations, the prevailing tendency here among the older as well as the younger painters is frankly in this direction, which at first glance may appear to be a curious result of an international exposition.

"Nor was California art so truly representative of the life and landscape of California as it has shown itself in the work done since the Exposition, which seems to have liberated the artistic potentialities of the community—and by community I mean the whole Pacific coast, which shared in the effects of these liberating influences. It was a matter of general comment among many who visited the first Jury Free Exhibition of the Works of California Artists given in the Palace of Fine Arts in the summer of 1916 that they had been wholly unaware of the existence of so many able artists on the coast, and this surprise was shared by the country at large when the first Travelling Exhibition of the Works of California Painters sent out by the San Francisco Art Association, was shown outside the State. To the rest of the country, long accustomed to accepting California art as personified in the venerable Keith and the panoramic Thomas Hill, this collection was a revelation of a hitherto little known country expressed with a clearly defined individualism, refreshingly free from any dogmatic parti pris.

"Here was an art mature and yet possessed of the zest and freshness of youth, not so much a matter of years as of an unspoiled point of view, perennially interested in things for their own sake. Although the last to achieve that wider recognition, I am sure California art will not be the least important contribution to the art of America. Indeed, I rather expect to see in the near future the most distinctively national expression in American art produced in California. Especially will this be true, I think, of the landscapes painted out here. Many signs point to the development of a great school of landscape painters, whose achievements, I believe, are destined to epitomize the true spirit of America in a manner hitherto unrealized.

"The bold contours of the hills bulging large against the blue vault, the sweeping arms of the bay, the big trees and great streams, the vast expanse of the Pacific, upon which the Californian gazes from birth, give him a bigness of vision that visualizes things and events in their entirety. The results of this are fast appearing in the art as well as in the civic and commercial life of the coast, whose preeminent influence in national affairs is now an accomplished and accepted fact. And with the opening of this annual exhibition (the second to be held since the close of the exposition) I am sure every well informed student of contemporary art will readily admit that California art can no longer be judged merely by local standards; it is to-day an integral part of American art, and must be so regarded both in and out of the State.

"The present annual exposition is made notable and will remain noteworthy by reason of two things: It is the first definite exposition of the new point of view crystallized by the influence of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and therefore an important mile stone in the art history of the coast and the nation, and it also marks the first participation of the architects in these annual exhibitions of the San Francisco Art Association, thereby reestablishing that common relationship between architecture and the allied arts which furnished such fruitful sources of mutually beneficial cooperation in the past.

"The gain to our community that may be expected from this reunion of the arts is hardly to be calculated at the present moment, but I believe one of the most important results will be to make utility once more synonymous with beauty, to the great advantage of both. Only in the harmonious blending of the two can we find the possibility of an environment satisfying to the inner as well as the outward needs of modern man, and the participation of the architects with the paint-